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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4936
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1050
RUEHSL/AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA 0060
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 9822
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0275
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4279
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1741
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3469
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0464
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6919
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4535
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 0857
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0860
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0558
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2805
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0448
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001124

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: CHARGE MEETS WITH MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS

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Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: After several requests and cancellations, Charge finally met with Minister for Home Affairs Maung Oo to stress the importance of meaningful progress toward democracy, the release of political prisoners, and greater access to Burma for journalists. The Minister lamented the West's negative view of Burma and urged the Charge to "report the truth" in her communications with Washington. The Charge acknowledged the cooperation we had received on narcotics eradication, Embassy security, consular access to American prisoner Andy Chau, and trafficking in persons. The biggest news of the meeting came when the Minister announced that the GOB wished to resume joint opium eradication surveys with the U.S. as soon as possible. Charge welcomed the news, but said greater cooperation also required progress on the political issues. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) In an August 7 meeting in Naypyitaw with Minister for Home Affairs Maung Oo, the Charge expressed our appreciation for the cooperation we had with Ministry officials on counternarcotics, chancery security, consular access to American prisoner Andy Chau, and trafficking in persons. Maung Oo emphasized that security for USG buildings in Burma is a high priority for his ministry, and informed the Charge that the GOB had recently enhanced security around the U.S. and Israeli Embassies due to ongoing events in the Middle East.

13. (C) On other issues, Maung Oo said that we just needed to write him a letter whenever we wanted to visit Andy Chau. He explained the long delay we experienced in 2005 was due to the fact that the GOB considered Chau a Burmese citizen. He surprised us by announcing that the GOB was ready to enhance

U.S.-Burma counternarcotics cooperation by resuming joint opium eradication surveys, which had been suspended since 2004. He explained that the GOB had decided his ministry would assume responsibility for this issue now that Khin Nyunt's Military Intelligence organization, with whom we previously coordinated, had been disbanded.

14. (C) Charge welcomed the news, but added that cooperation would be considerably improved if the Minister responsible for prisons could arrange the release of all political prisoners. Maung Oo replied that the issue is under discussion, noting that Thai PM Thaksin had also raised this issue with Senior General Than Shwe during his recent visit to Burma and that the Burmese Foreign Minister had received the same message at the recent ASEAN meeting in Kuala Lumpur. He complained that Burma's problems with the international community were caused by a hostile, foreign media bent on destroying Burma's national unity, and he urged the Charge to reflect the real situation in her communications with Washington. The Charge responded that he could solve this by welcoming visits by foreign media, organizations, and officials to Burma. Those who wished to visit Burma should be granted free access to travel to all regions and report what they see. The Minister pointed out that the Charge had recently traveled to the Wa territories, and could travel elsewhere in Burma to see for herself the actual situation.

15. (C) The Charge underscored the importance of regular communication between the GOB and the USG, and emphasized the high-level USG interest in progress toward democracy in Burma. The Minister replied that he had heard that President and Mrs. Bush had dinner with UN U/SYG Gambari. This demonstrated the genuine concern by the U.S. for the country's future, said the Charge. If we saw dramatic and significant moves, she added, the U.S. would be prepared to

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respond. The Minister assured the Charge that he was ready to meet regularly with her and designated various officials that we could also work with on various issues.

16. (C) Because we tried to talk with everyone in the country, the Charge said we could report accurately on the situation here. Maung Oo complained that despite its progress on trafficking in persons, Burma still received a Tier 3 ranking in the Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report. The Charge explained that we did recognize the positive steps, which the GOB had cited, but that forced labor was also an important factor in determining country rankings. Until the GOB made serious progress in eliminating this practice throughout the country, she said Burma's ranking was unlikely to change.

17. (C) COMMENT: Maung Oo has a notorious reputation for using forced labor for government projects, including hotels, dams, and canals, and for his oppressive military operations against Karen and Mon insurgents during his tenure as Commander of Southern (Tanintharyi) Division. We believe he was the driving force behind opening the road in front of the chancery last fall. Charge had made several requests to meet with Maung Oo since last October, which would get canceled at the last minute. It seems clear based on this meeting and septel meeting with the Labor Minister that the GOB has decided for the moment to &make nice8 with us. The messages insisting on reform are definitely getting through, however we do not expect any bold measures. Instead, the GOB may hope that by changing the tone, the demands will diminish. We will take every advantage, now that the door has been opened, to push for greater openness and an inclusive political dialogue. END COMMENT.

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